



DeKalb County  
G E O R G I A

Board of Ethics  
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Dr. Moncef Slaoui is the kind of overachiever that makes the rest of us feel small. In fact, if you strung Dr. Slaoui's achievements together you might swear that he is 90 and not the mere 61 years of age he truly is.

Dr. Slaoui grew up in Morocco and was educated in Europe. He received his PhD in molecular biology and immunology from the University of Brussels. He has post-doctoral degrees from both Harvard and Tufts Universities.

Dr. Slaoui spent 30 years at GlaxoSmithKlein, an international giant in the pharmaceutical industry. During his time at GSK, Dr. Slaoui spent 15 years in vaccine development and later became part of the company leadership. He held the positions of Director of Global Research and Development, executive roles in the C-suite and later sat on GSK's Board of Directors.

The vaccines Dr. Slaoui took part in developing at GSK include some of the most important vaccines in use today; they include vaccines to prevent cervical cancer, malaria, roto virus (causing the death of millions of infants in developing nations) and shingles. If there were an Oscar for scientists, Dr. Slaoui would have made several trips down the red carpet.

After retiring from GSK, Dr. Slaoui sat on the boards of other pharmaceutical companies such as Moderna, now one of the leaders in developing the COVID 19 vaccine. He also joined a venture capital firm to promote innovation in the health care system or in his own words, "to improve human life." Fortune magazine named Dr. Slaoui one of the 50 greatest world leaders.

It was not surprising then that President Trump called upon Dr. Slaoui to lead *Operation Warp Speed*. Operation Warp Speed (OWS) is a public-private partnership to develop a COVID 19 vaccine and therapeutics in an accelerated manner in order that we can resume a normal life. The OWS project is led by the Department of Health and Human Service, the Defense Department and many private pharmaceutical companies. OWS is named after the fantastic speed in which the Star Trek ship "Enterprise" sped across the Universe "to reach strange, new worlds and to boldly go where no man has gone before."

As the Chief Scientific Advisor of OWS, Dr. Slaoui continues to make the normal human being seem like a slouch. He wakes up early – at a time that most of would think as the middle of the night – to discuss vaccine and therapeutic developments with European partners and is in the office by 6 am where he works until the end of the day. Dr. Slaoui is not being compensated for his efforts (unless you count the \$1 stated in his contract) and is temporarily living in Washington DC, away from his family in Philadelphia, in order to lead the project.

So why am I entertaining you with the story of Dr. Slaoui? I am hoping that some of you have already picked up on a conflict of interest. In his position as Chief Scientific Officer for Operation Warp Speed, Dr. Slaoui has more than a little influence on how the U.S. Government spends billions of tax dollars. Nevertheless, on August 2, 2020 the New York Times reported that Dr. Slaoui owned stocks in two

different pharmaceutical companies, Moderna and GSK. According to the NYTimes, “Moderna received nearly \$1 billion in federal support to develop a vaccine and GSK, a partner with the French drugmaker Sanofi, signed a \$2.1 billion agreement to produce 100 million doses.

That being said, Dr. Slaoui did resign from the Board of Moderna after going through the HHS ethics process when he began his position as Chief Scientific Advisor. Additionally, he sold his stock in Moderna, but as of May the New Times reports that Dr. Slaoui still owns nearly \$10 million of GSK stock.

Dr. Slaoui for his part is dismayed by the press attention over his potential conflicts of interest. In fact he stated in an interview on an HHS sponsored podcast entitled, “Learning Curve”, “I am amazed that I am being attacked on a personal basis.”

I feel for Dr. Slaoui, I truly do. Here is a man who has devoted his entire professional career to what is by all accounts a noble cause. Yes, he has been well compensated for his work, but he has achieved a level of greatness that most of us never come close to grasping. Furthermore, I might even believe Dr. Slaoui when he says that he would never use his influence to achieve personal gain while working to develop a vaccine that is fundamental to our lives and livelihood.

Nevertheless, Dr. Slaoui has a big problem; it is the significant appearance of impropriety. Even if Dr. Slaoui only uses his position and influence to ensure that federal government resources are used in the best interest of the Operation Warp Speed project, his decisions with respect to companies in which he owns shares will automatically be suspect.

It is the same for that employee who allows contractors to take him or her to lunch or dinner. The employee may certainly think that they would never be influenced by the personal favor – but what does everyone think when they see the employee eating in a restaurant with that contractor. Does it sound like, “hmm, he’s on the take”. These perceptions lead to distrust of government – even with respect to its most laudable projects like OWS.

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